

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A process comprising:

a) combustion of a fossil fuel, thereby generating heat and a hot exhaust gas containing CO₂;

b) converting said heat into energy;

the process being characterized in that it comprises the steps of:

c) cooling said exhaust gas; and

d) reducing the amount of CO₂ contained in the cooled exhaust gas by biologically transforming said CO₂ into carbonated species; thereby obtaining a low CO₂ exhaust gas, wherein step d) comprises the steps of:

- catalyzing the hydration of at least a portion of the CO₂ contained in the exhaust gas and producing a solution containing hydrogen ions and carbonate ions; and wherein said hydration is catalyzed by the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or an analog thereof.

2. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 1, wherein step d) comprises:
~~characterized in that step d) comprises the steps of:~~

~~-catalyzing the hydration of at least a portion of the CO₂ contained in the exhaust gas and producing a solution containing hydrogen ions and carbonate ions; and~~

~~- adding to said solution metal ions, and adjusting the pH of the solution to precipitate a carbonate of said metal;~~

~~wherein said hydration is catalyzed by a biocatalyst capable of catalyzing the hydration of dissolved CO₂ into hydrogen ions and bicarbonate ions.~~

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 12, wherein step d) comprises the step of:

- feeding liquid H₂O and at least a portion of the exhaust gas into a bioreactor containing therein a reaction chamber filled with said enzyme carbonic anhydrase or said analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~.

6. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 5, characterized in that the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or said analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ is immobilized on solid supports packing the bioreactor.

7. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 12, wherein step d) comprises the step of:

- feeding at least a portion of the exhaust gas into a bioreactor containing therein a reaction chamber filled with said enzyme carbonic anhydrase or said analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ in suspension in a liquid phase.

8. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 7, characterized in that the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or said analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ is free in said aqueous liquid phase, or immobilized on solid supports or entrapped inside a solid matrix.

9. (Currently Amended) A process as defined in claim 21, characterized in that, in step c), the exhaust gas is cooled to a temperature sufficiently low so as to maintain a catalytic effect of the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or said analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~.

10. (Previously Presented) A process as defined in claim 1, characterized in that it comprises, prior to step d) of reducing, the step of:

- removing from the exhaust gas additional contaminants contained in the exhaust gas.

11. (Original) A process as defined in claim 10, characterized in that said additional contaminants are selected from the group consisting of ash, NO_x and SO₂.

12. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 2, characterized in that the metal ions are selected from the group consisting of calcium, barium, magnesium and sodium ions.

13. (Original) A process as defined in claim 12, characterized in that said metal ions are Ca^{++} and the carbonate is CaCO_3 .

14. (Previously Presented) A process as defined in claim 1, characterized in that step c) of cooling is performed by means of a heat exchanger that removes heat from said cooled exhaust gas, the heat removed being recycled in step b) of the process.

15. (Currently Amended) A power plant comprising:

- a combustion unit for burning fossil fuel, thereby producing heat and an exhaust gas containing CO_2 ;

- means for converting said heat into energy;

the plant being characterized in that it comprises:

- means for cooling the exhaust gas;

- biological means for biologically transforming at least a portion of the CO_2 from the cooled exhaust gas into hydrogen ions and carbonate ions; and

- precipitation means for precipitating carbonated species from the carbonate ions,

wherein said biological means comprises a bioreactor including a reaction chamber filled with the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or an analog thereof to catalyze the hydration of dissolved CO_2 into hydrogen ions and bicarbonate ions.

16. (Original) A power plant as defined in claim 15, characterized in that said means for cooling the exhaust gas comprises a heat exchanger.

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Currently Amended) A power plant as defined in claim ~~15~~17, characterized in that the reaction chamber comprises:

- a liquid inlet for receiving an aqueous liquid;

- a gas inlet for receiving the cooled exhaust gas to be treated;
- a gas outlet for releasing a low CO₂ gas; and
- a liquid outlet for releasing a solution containing carbonate ions.

19. (Original) A power plant as defined in claim 18, characterized in that the precipitating means comprises:

- a precipitation vessel to react said bicarbonate ions with metal ions and precipitate a carbonate of said metal.

20. (Currently Amended) A power plant as defined in claim 18, characterized in that the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or the analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ is immobilized on solid supports packing the reaction chamber.

21. (Currently Amended) A power plant as defined in claim 18, characterized in that the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or the analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ is in suspension in an aqueous phase filling the reaction chamber.

22. (Currently Amended) A power plant as defined in claim 21, characterized in that the enzyme carbonic anhydrase or the analog thereof ~~biocatalyst~~ is free in said liquid phase, immobilized on solid supports or entrapped inside a solid matrix.